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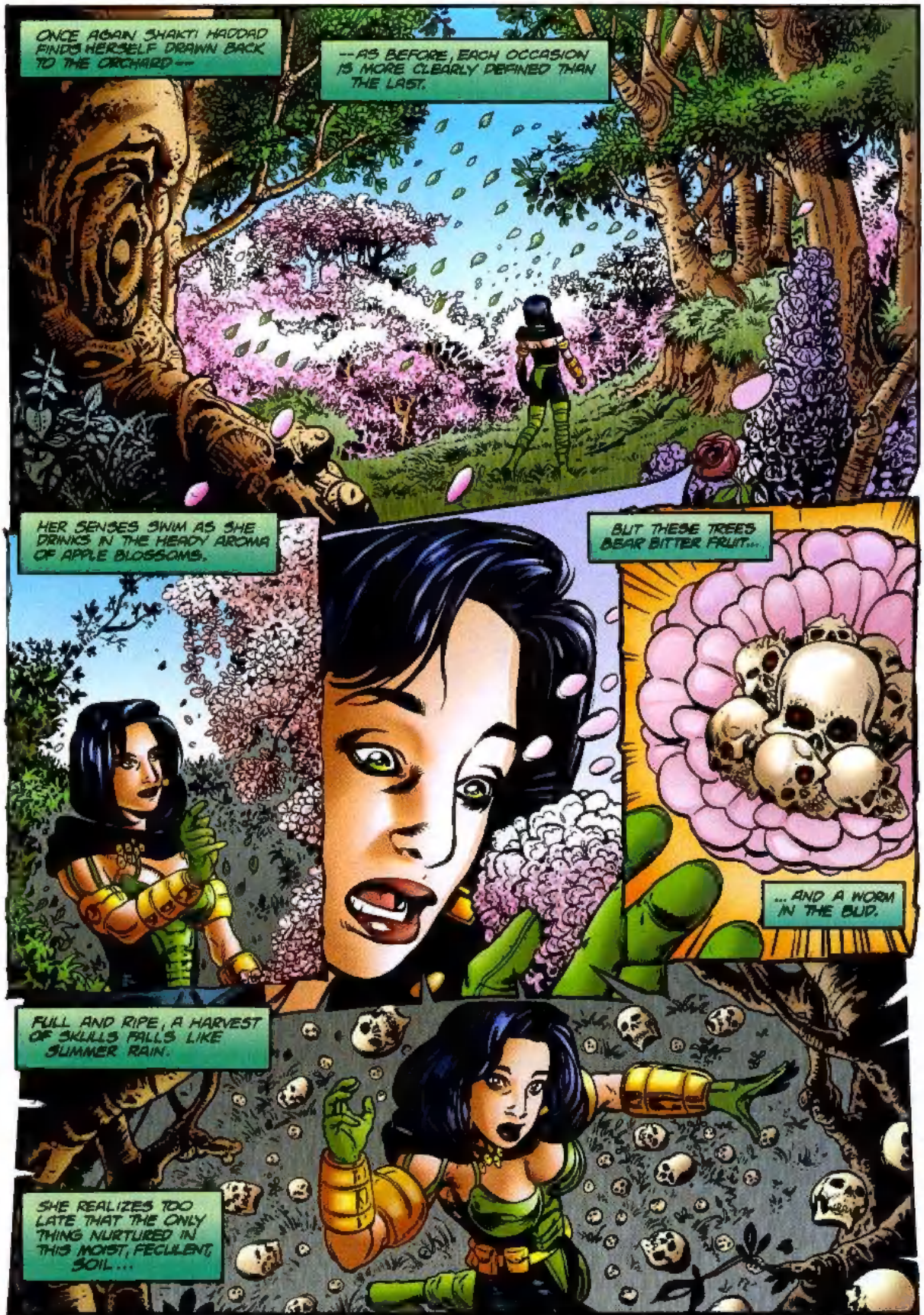
ONCE AGAIN SHAKTI HADDAD FINDS HERSELF DRAWN BACK TO THE ORCHARD--
--AS BEFORE, EACH OCCASION IS MORE CLEARLY DEFINED THAN THE LAST.
HER SENSES SWIM AS SHE DRINKS IN THE HEADY AROMA OF APPLE BLOSSOMS.
BUT THESE TREES BEAR BITTER FRUIT...
...AND A WORM IN THE BUD.
FULL AND RIPE, A HARVEST OF SKULLS FALLS LIKE SUMMER RAIN.
SHE REALIZES TOO LATE THAT THE ONLY THING NURTURED IN THIS MOIST, FECULENT SOIL...

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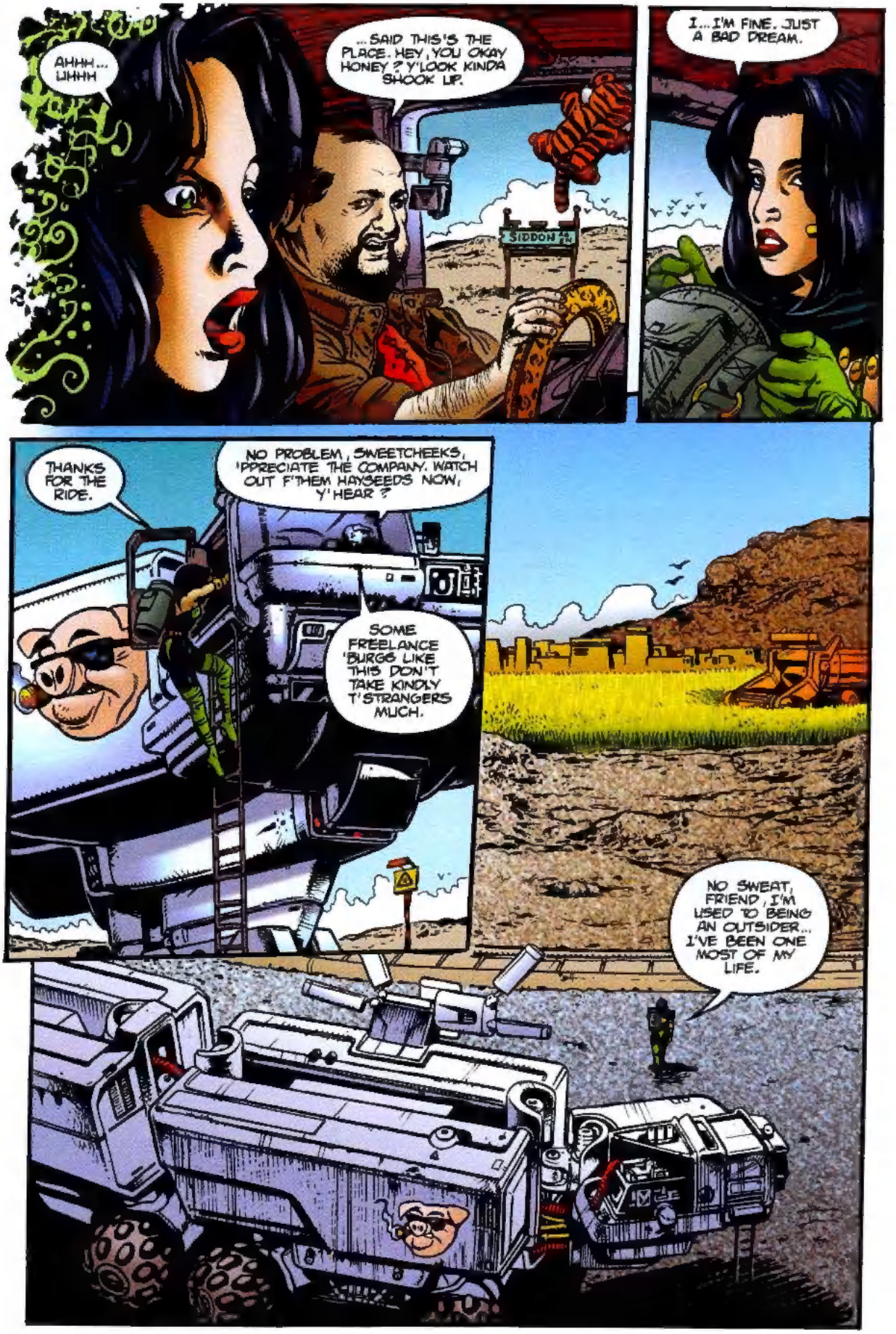
...IS DEATH!
STAN LEE PRESENTS:
TIN MAN
IAN EDGINTON WRITER
STEVE PUGH ARTIST
DAVE SHARPE LETTERS
MEGAN McDOWELL COLORS
JOEY CAVALIERI EDITOR
BOBBIE CHASE CHIEF
MALIBU COMPUTER COLOR

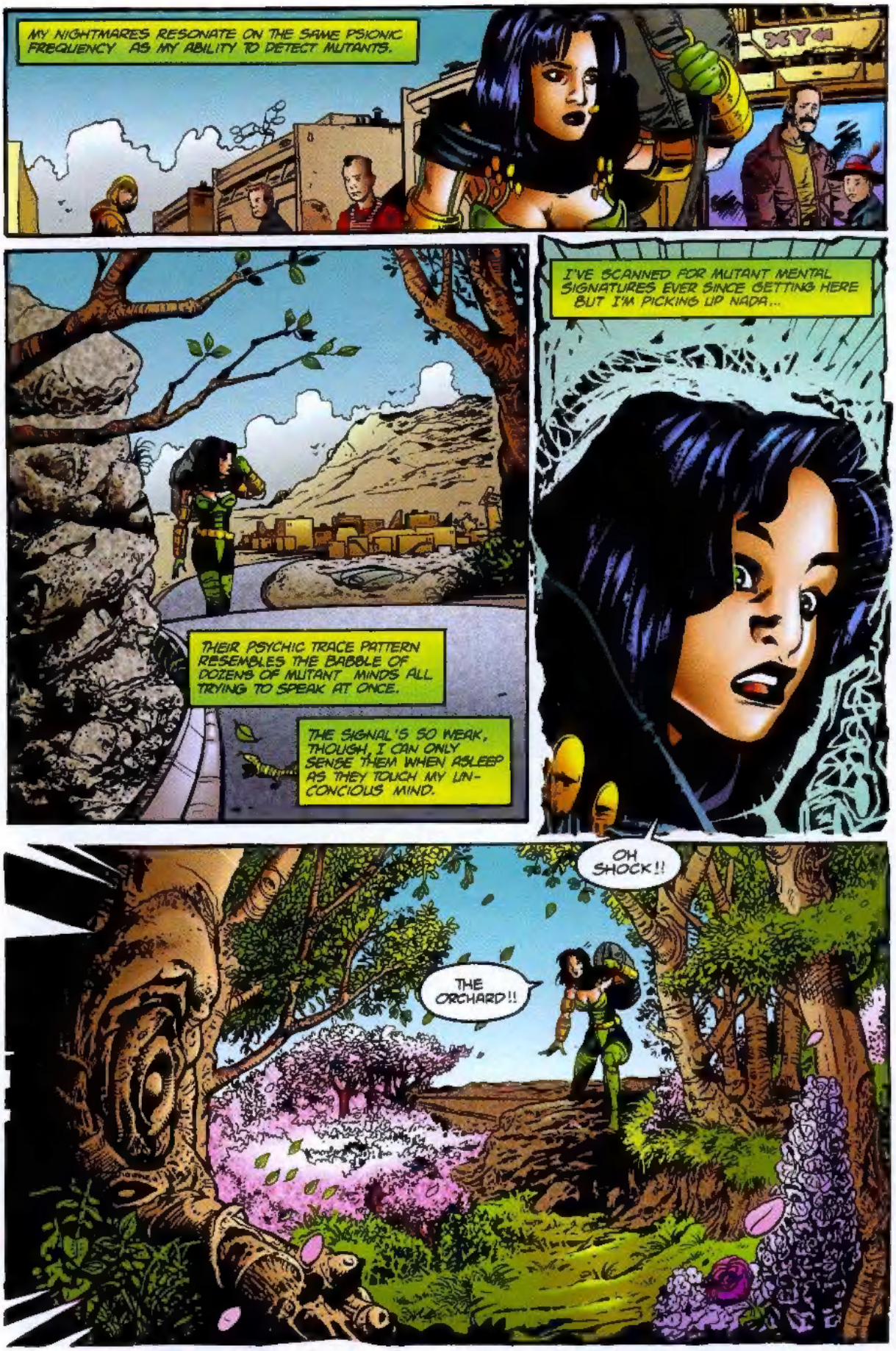

AHHH... UHHH
...SAID THIS'S THE PLACE. HEY, YOU OKAY HONEY? Y'LOOK KINDA SHOOK UP.
SIDDON
I... I'M FINE. JUST A BAD DREAM.
THANKS FOR THE RIDE.
NO PROBLEM, SWEETCHEEKS, 'PPRECIATE THE COMPANY. WATCH OUT F'THEM HAYSEEDS NOW, Y'HEAR?
SOME FREELANCE 'BURGS LIKE THIS DON'T TAKE KINDLY T'STRANGERS MUCH.
NO SWEAT, FRIEND, I'M USED TO BEING AN OUTSIDER... I'VE BEEN ONE MOST OF MY LIFE.

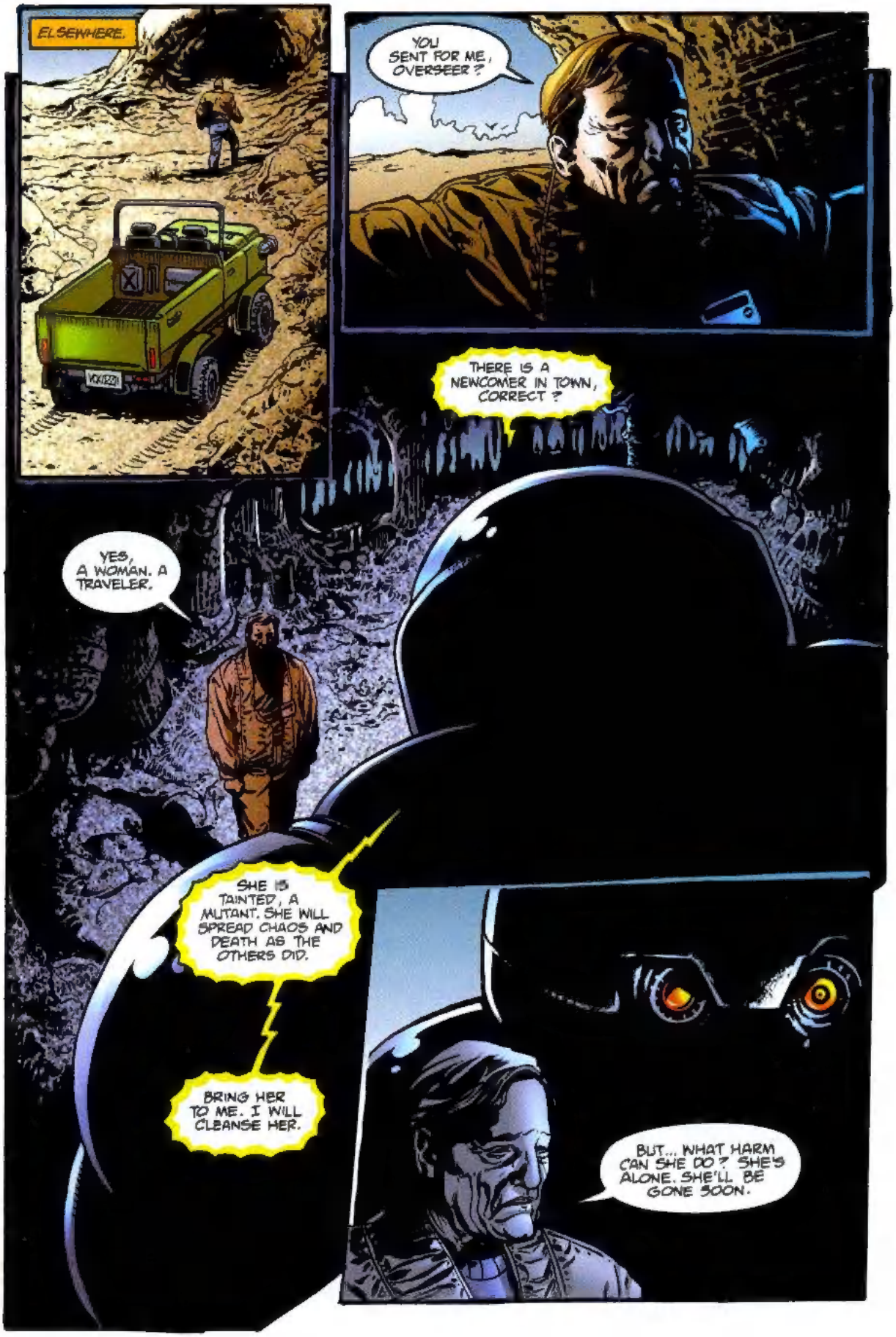
I'VE BEEN PLAGUED BY THE SAME NIGHTMARE FOR DAYS NOW. THE FURTHER WEST I GO, THE STRONGER IT GETS. THAT LAST ONE WAS THE MOST VIVID YET.
YOXXOTADA!
THERE'RE NO SETTLEMENTS AFTER THIS FOR NINETY CLICKS OR MORE. THE ANSWER'S GOT TO LIE HERE, SOMEWHERE.
BETTER PLAY THE LOST SOUL AND MINGLE WITH THE NATIVES.
BAR & GRILL
BARTENDER, SOMETHING STRONG AND WET IN A SHOT GLASS, MAKE IT A DOUBLE.
THIS ONE'S ON ME. WE DON'T SEE MANY NEW FACES 'ROUND HERE. LEAST WE CAN DO'S SHOW A LIL' COUNTRY HOSPITALITY.
I DON'T USUALLY ACCEPT DRINKS FROM STRANGERS.
GLAD T'HEAR IT. NAME'S BOB CORD, TOWN SAWBONES. THERE SEE, WE AIN'T STRANGERS NO MORE NOW.
WELCOME TO BIDDON MA'AM.

LATER.
I'M MEETING FRIENDS ON THE COAST BUT DECIDED TO TAKE A BREAK AND STRETCH MY LEGS...
...ALSO THAT TRUCKER WAS STARTING TO GET A LITTLE TOO INTIMATE, YOU KNOW ?
WHAT'S THE WORLD COMING TO THESE DAYS ?
I TELL YOU I'M GLAD T'LIVE OUT HERE IN TH'BACK OF BEYOND, AWAY FROM ALL THE MADNESS ELSEWHERE, LIFE MAKES SENSE HERE.
GENERAL STORE
OLD COUNTRY TOWNS LIKE SIDDON HAVE BEEN 'ROUND SO LONG THEY'RE PART OF THE LANDSCAPE, PART O' NATURE.
WE'VE A PACT WITH THE LAND. WE RESPECT AN' HONOR IT AND IT LETS US PROSPER.
AIN'T ALWAYS EASY. WE'VE HAD HARD TIMES BUT LIKE LIFE, SOMETIMES Y'GOTTA MAKE SACRIFICES T' SURVIVE.
NOOO !! IT'S HIM !! LET ME GO !!
I KILL YOU !!! KILL YOU DEAD !!!

YOU MURDERED MY FAMILY !! WE TRUSTED YOU AND YOU BETRAYED US !!
EVERYONE KNOWS ! THEY LET IT HAPPEN !! THEY'RE ALL GUILTY !! WHY ? WHY ? WHY ?
IT'S OKAY PEGGY, EVERYTHING'S FINE.
WHAT HAPPENED ?
SHE ONLY WANTED TO TAKE SOME AIR... UH, I DIDN'T THINK...
NO, YOU DIDN'T ! TAKE HER HOME. I'LL FETCH A SEDATIVE.
POOR PEGGY. HER HUSBAND AND DAUGHTER WERE IN AN AUTO ACCIDENT. WE COULDN'T CUT THEM OUT OF THE WRECK, SO I OPERATED WHILE THEY WERE STILL TRAPPED...
...I COULDN'T SAVE THEM, SHE BLAMES ME.

DOC! DOC! THE OVERSEER WANTS TO SEE YOU RIGHT...
...AWAY, OH!
SAY HELLO TO MISS HADDAD, PETE. WE DON'T WANT HER THINKING OUR YOUNG FOLKS'VE NO MANNERS, DO WE?
UH, HI! GOTTA RUN, BYE!
BOY MOVES SO FAST HIS OWN SHADOW CAN'T CATCH HIM.
I'M SORRY BUT DUTY CALLS. IN A SMALL PLACE LIKE THIS I GOTTA WEAR MORE HATS THAN A MOOSEHEAD HAT-RACK.
COME OVER FOR DINNER LATER. ANYONE'LL POINT OUT MY PLACE TO YOU.
I MAY DO JUST THAT.
SOMETHING'S WRONG HERE...VERY WRONG.
TIME TO NOSE AROUND I THINK.


MY NIGHTMARES RESONATE ON THE SAME PSIONIC FREQUENCY AS MY ABILITY TO DETECT MUTANTS.
XY
THEIR PSYCHIC TRACE PATTERN RESEMBLES THE BABBLE OF DOZENS OF MUTANT MINDS ALL TRYING TO SPEAK AT ONCE.
THE SIGNAL'S SO WEAK, THOUGH, I CAN ONLY SENSE THEM WHEN ASLEEP AS THEY TOUCH MY UN-CONCIOUS MIND.
I'VE SCANNED FOR MUTANT MENTAL SIGNATURES EVER SINCE GETTING HERE BUT I'M PICKING UP NADA...
OH SHOCK!!
THE ORCHARD!!


ELSEWHERE.
YOU SENT FOR ME, OVERSEER?
THERE IS A NEWCOMER IN TOWN, CORRECT?
YES, A WOMAN. A TRAVELER.
SHE IS TAINTED, A MUTANT. SHE WILL SPREAD CHAOS AND DEATH AS THE OTHERS DID.
BRING HER TO ME. I WILL CLEANSE HER.
BUT... WHAT HARM CAN SHE DO? SHE'S ALONE. SHE'LL BE GONE SOON.

HNNG.
SKZZAKK
YOU ARE WEAK, CORD. YOUR FATHER AND GRANDFATHER WERE MY LOYAL STEWARDS, THEY OBEYED WITHOUT QUESTION.
ARE YOU LOYAL, CORD?
NNHH... UHH YES, OVERSEER.
THE WOMAN HAS FRIENDS EXPECTING HER. SUPPOSE THEY COME LOOKING FOR HER?
I WILL BE READY FOR THEM. NOW GO!

SO FAR SO GOOD. NOTHING NASTY'S CREPT OUT OF THE WOODWORK YET.
SOMETHING'S HERE THOUGH. AN UNDERLYING PSIONIC SURFACE TENSION... (IT'S ALMOST TANGIBLE, I CAN--
HYAHHH!!
MUTANTS! MEN... WOMEN... CHILDREN... DEAD!
SO MANY... SO LONG... WAITING IN THE DARK COLD GROUND.
LOST... FRIGHTENED... CRYING OUT FOR HELP...

...UNQUIET SPIRITS.
ELIJAH GILLIS SHOT TO DEATH IN THE CORN WHISKEY COURAGE ON HIS KILLERS' BREATH.
THE LAMAQUE SISTERS BUTCHERED BY THEIR FAVORITE NEPHEW. HE WEPT AS HE SPLIT THEIR BONES LIKE CORDWOOD.
RAY MCCLOUD AND HIS DAUGHTER AMY, GUNNED DOWN BY MEN HE'D KNOWN ALL HIS LIFE.
MURDERED!

THEY MURDERED THEM ALL...
...DIDN'T THEY, DOCTOR?
PEGGY WAS RIGHT, WASN'T SHE?! YOU DID KILL HER FAMILY, DIDN'T YOU?
IT WAS... NECESSARY.
YOU'RE AN OUTSIDER, YOU WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND OUR WAYS. HOLD STILL NOW.
WHAT'S THIS? MORE OF YOUR COUNTRY HOSPITALITY?
IT'S A CONTROL COLLAR. IT'LL INHIBIT WHATEVER MUTANT POWERS YOU HAVE.
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? WHY'RE YOU TURNING ON YOUR OWN, FOR SHOCK'S SAKE?!
IT'S A LONG STORY.
TRY ME. AFTER ALL, I'M A CAPTIVE AUDIENCE!

QUIT SHOVING!
'BOUT A CENTURY AGO, SIDDON HIT REAL HARD TIMES. FOLKS WERE ALL FOR UP AN' QUITTIN! THEN OLE MAN PARKER FOUND THE OVERSEER.
THE OVERSEER SAID HOW MUTANTS WERE T'BLAME FOR EVERYTHIN', USIN' THEIR [redacted] T'OVERTHROW MANKIND... SAID WE HAD T'ROOT 'EM OUT 'FORE THEY TOOK OVER SIDDON.
HE TESTED EVERYONE TO JUDGE IF THEY WERE PURE. THOSE FOUND WANTING WERE CLEANSED FROM LIFE... LATER SIDDON PROSPERED LIKE NEVER BEFORE, STILL DOES.
SINCE THEN WE'VE CONTINUED PURGING ANY MUTANTS FROM OUR MIDST 'CASE THE TAINT TAKES HOLD AGAIN.
IT'S HARD SOMETIMES, I'VE LOST FRIENDS AN' FAMILY DOWN THE YEARS BUT IT'S F'THE GREATER GOOD OF THE TOWN.
YOU'VE SLAUGHTERED DOZENS OF PEOPLE ON THE WORD OF SOMETHING YOU FOUND UNDERGROUND?!! WHO IS THIS OVERSEER?!!
I KNOW!!

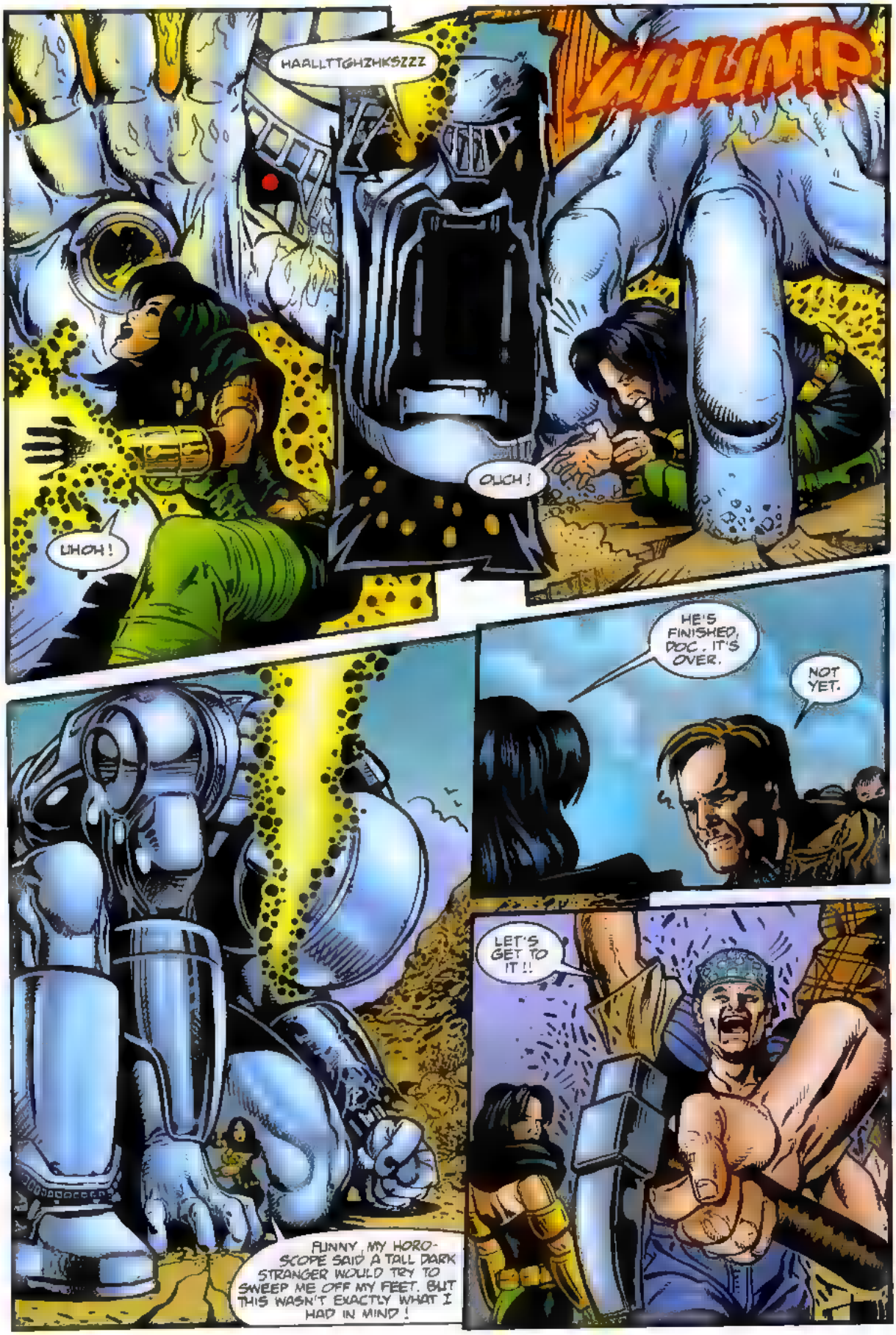
A SENTINEL !!
A WHAT ?
NO! [redacted] NOT LISTEN TO HER. CLEANSE HER IMMEDIATELY !
IT'S ONLY A ROBOT! A BROKEN ROBOT !! IT DIDN'T CHANGE YOUR TOWN'S FORTUNES ! THAT JUST HAPPENED LIKE THINGS DO !!
SENTINELS AREN'T ORACLES OF WISDOM ! THEY'RE KILLING MACHINES BUILT DECADES AGO BY RACIST PUSBAGS TO HUNT MUTANTS !!
IT'S INCAPACITATED SO IT'S GOT YOU TO DO IT'S DIRTY WORK [redacted] IT !! YOU'VE BEEN SUCKERED BIG TIME !
YOU'RE LYING !!
IS SHE ? TELL US !!
MUTANTS ARE [redacted] BLIGHT TO [redacted] EXCISED. THERE ARE NO OTHER CONSIDERATIONS. ALL OTHER PRIORITIES ARE RESCINDED.

IT'S A MACHINE! IT TRICKED YOU INTO FULFILLING ITS PROGRAMMING!
SHOCK IT, BOB! WE'VE BEEN HAD!!
RESISTANCE IS FUTILE.
SZZKK!
SO MUCH FOR THE PEOPLE'S BENEFACTOR, EH, DOC?
I NO LONGER HAVE NEED OF YOU. ON-BOARD SYSTEMS HAVE COMPLETED SUFFICIENT REPAIRS FOR FULL AUTONOMY.
PRIMARY MOBILE SYSTEMS RE-BOOTED, ORDNANCE ARRAYS ON-LINE. COMMENCING RESURRECTION PROTOCOL ALPHA.

NO WAY THAT SENTINEL'S PLAYING WITH A FULL DECK!
IT'S SYSTEMS MUST BE SO CORRUPTED BY AGE AND DECAY, IT DOESN'T REGISTER THE EXTENT OF ITS DAMAGE.
EASIER FOR ME TO TAKE IT OUT... AFTER I LOSE THE JEWELRY. SORRY, DOC, I MADE YOU THINK YOU'D LOCKED IT WHEN YOU HADN'T.
HALT! OBEY OR DIE!!
OH BOY! THAT'S ONE BIG ROBOT!
THERE IS NO SECOND WARNING. YOU WILL NOW COMPLY.
YOU WILL CONTINUE TO IMPLEMENT MY PROGRAM OF MUTANT GENOCIDE COMMENCING WITH THE WOMAN. BRING HER TO ME.

HEY, TOUGH GUY! CAN'T YOU TAKE OUT ONE ITTY BITTY MUTANT ALL BY YOURSELF? MUST BE LOSING YOUR TOUCH!
IF I CAN DRAIN HIS FIRE, HE'LL LEAVE THE OTHERS ALONE. SMART MOVE, SHAKTI, BUT WHO'S GONNA SAVE YOUR BUTT, EH?
SSZZAKK
HALT!
CHOOM!!
I DON'T THINK SO!!
HUMANS! ATTENTION!! DESTROY THE MUTANT! SHE [redacted] A THREAT. SHE AND HER SPECIES SEEK TO SEIZE THIS WORLD FROM YOU.
IN THE SAME WAY I TAUGHT YOU TO CONSTRUCT THE CONTROL COLLARS, YOU WILL BUILD MORE OF MY KIND. [redacted] ARMY OF SENTINELS TO ERADICATE THE STAIN OF MUTANTKIND.
HEAR THAT, DOC? YOUR PART IN YOUR SAVIOR'S GREAT DESIGN!
NO, NOT AGAIN...
...NEVER AGAIN!!!
BRAKKA BRAKKA BRAKKA

HE'S WAVERING! POUR IT ON!!
CEASE! NNZZLGG INTERNAL ZZYSTMZZZ COMPROMYZZDD ARTERAL ZZSENSZ NET NNDIZSNABLED...
LANDINGGG IMPERATIVVVKK RE-CONFIGURE ENERGY FLOW FROM ANTI-GRAV ZSERVOS TO ORDNANCE ARRAYZZZ.
IF I CAN JUST GET CLOSE ENOUGH TO AHUT DOWN ITS NEURAL NET...
NOW!!
TAG! YOU'RE IT!!

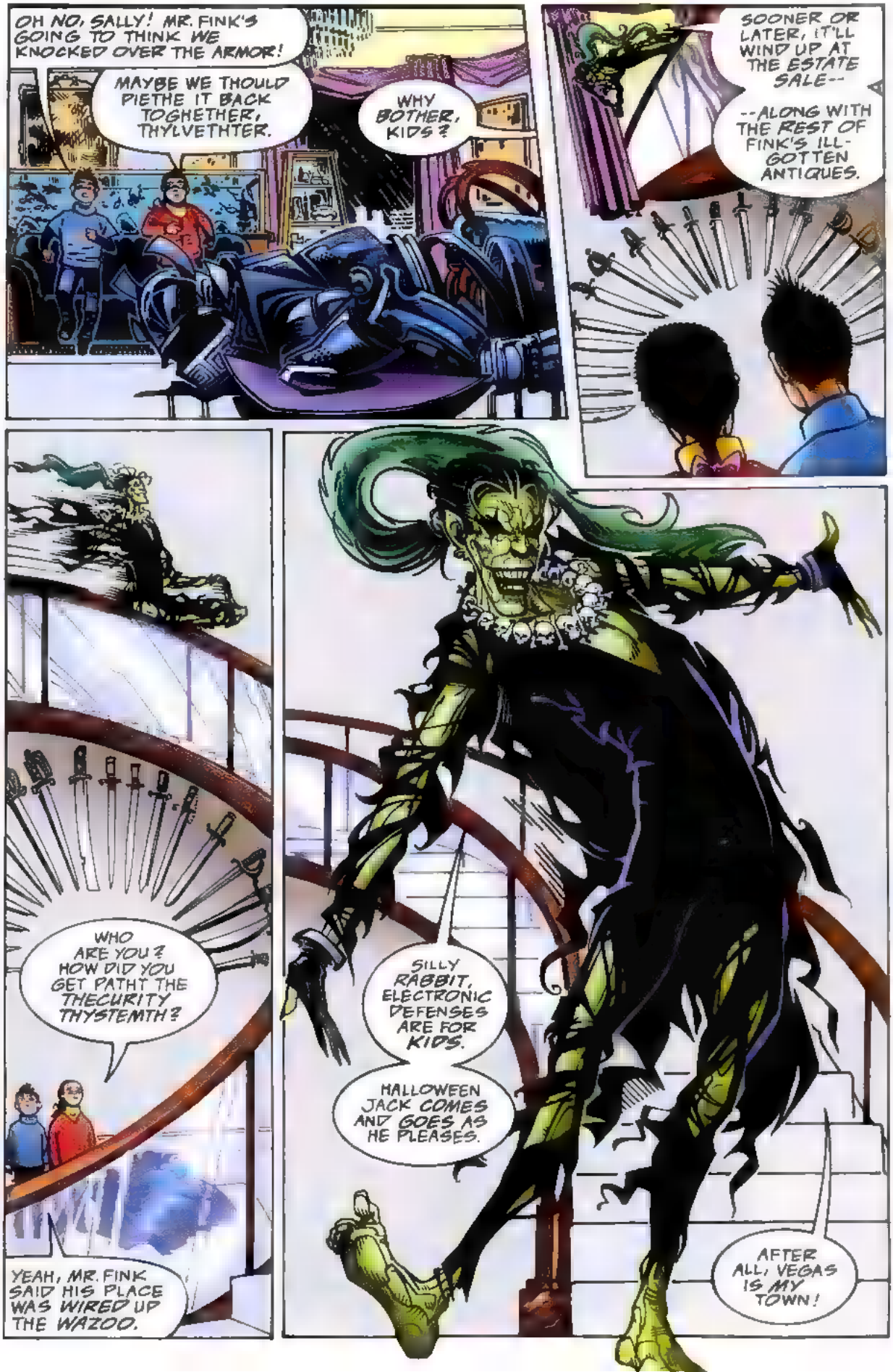

HAALLTTGHZHKSZZZ
WHUMP
UHOH!
OUCH!
HE'S FINISHED, DOC. IT'S OVER.
NOT YET.
LET'S GET TO IT!!
FUNNY, MY HORO-SCOPE SAID A TALL DARK STRANGER WOULD TRY TO SWEEP ME OFF MY FEET. BUT THIS WASN'T EXACTLY WHAT I HAD IN MIND!

KRANG
WHUMP
TALK ABOUT BITING THE HAND THAT FED YOU ? WELL, IT'S A START I GUESS...
... BUT THEY'VE A LONG WAY TO GO YET.
MISS HADDAD! WAIT UP!!

I... I'M SORRY FOR EVERYTHING. WE'VE A BITTER PAST TO FACE UP TO NOW, A LOT OF GUILT TO LIVE WITH.
IT'S GONNA BE A BAD TIME. I DON'T [redacted] IF THE TOWN'LL PULL THROUGH IT...
FORGIVE ME [redacted] I DON'T HAVE ANY PITY FOR YOU, DOCTOR, BUT YOU'VE HEARD THE SAYING "PHYSICIAN HEAL THYSELF"?
WHAT SHOULD WE DO NOW?
DON'T ASK ME! TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR OWN LIVES FOR A CHANGE.
TAKE EACH DAY AS IT COMES, THERE'S NO BLUEPRINT FOR LIFE. YOU JUST DO IT AND [redacted] WHAT HAPPENS!
THERE IS ONE THING, THOUGH.
MAKE PEACE WITH YOUR DEAD..
GIVE THEM A PROPER BURIAL.
END

SALLY & SYLVESTER STAY AT HOME
BY JOHN FRANCIS MOORE & GRAHAM HIGGINS
WITH PHIL FELIX (LETTERER) AND PAUL BECTON (COLORIST)
[redacted] BY [redacted] BODY'S FAVORITE UNCLE JOEY UNDER THE ADULT SUPERVISION OF MS. CHASE
HI NOTE
CASINO HOTEL
ALL RIGHT, YOU RUGRATS, LISTEN UP!
THE LOVELY MISS SEPTEMBER AND I ARE STEPPING OUT FOR THE EVENING.
AND WHILE WE ARE PAINTING THIS DESERT TOWN EVERY SHADE OF RED--
--DON'T YOU TWO BRATS GET ANY BRIGHT IDEAS--
--LIKE TRYING TO CONTACT YOUR NO DOUBT DISTRAUGHT PARENTS--
--OR TRYING TO LEAVE THESE OPULENT CONFINES.
DO I MAKE MYSELF CLEAR?
YES, MR. FINK.
YETH, THIR.
AND ONE MORE THING--
--IF YOU PUT YOUR GREASY LITTLE HANDS ON ANY OF MY OBJETS D'ART--
--YOU'RE FISH FOOD.

K-CLANG!
K-CLANG!
K-CLANG!
K-CLANG!
K-CLANG!

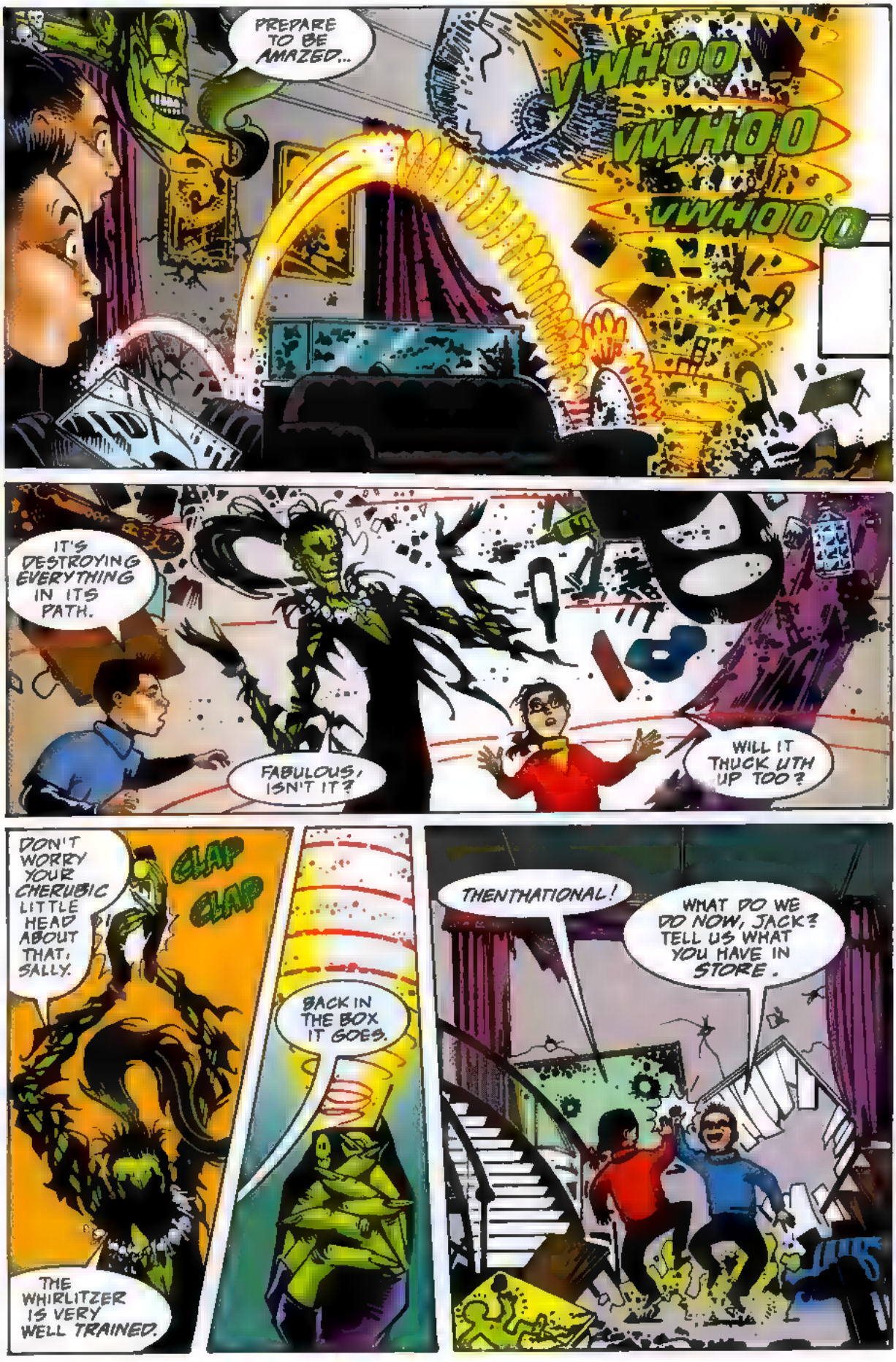

OH NO, SALLY! MR. FINK'S GOING TO THINK WE KNOCKED OVER THE ARMOR!
MAYBE WE THOULD PIETHE IT BACK TOGHETHER, THYLVETHTER.
WHY BOTHER, KIDS?
SOONER OR LATER, IT'LL WIND UP AT THE ESTATE SALE--
--ALONG WITH THE REST OF FINK'S ILL-GOTTEN ANTIQUES.
WHO ARE YOU? HOW DID YOU GET PATHT THE THECURITY THYSTEMTH?
YEAH, MR. FINK SAID HIS PLACE WAS WIRED UP THE WAZOO.
SILLY RABBIT, ELECTRONIC DEFENSES ARE FOR KIDS.
HALLOWEEN JACK COMES AND GOES AS HE PLEASES.
AFTER ALL, VEGAS IS MY TOWN!

YOU BETTER LEAVE. IF MR. FINK FINDS YOU HERE, HE'LL KILL YOU.
OH, SALLY AND SYLVESTER, I'M DISAPPOINTED.
YOU HAVEN'T BEEN CAPTIVE LONG ENOUGH TO SIDE WITH YOUR KIDNAPPER.
DON'T YOU KNOW YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO ABANDON HOPE COMPLETELY UNTIL YOU'RE AN ADULT?
WE HAVE TO THTAY.
BUT WORRY NOT, BUCKAROOS! YOUR PAL JACK'S GONNA BRIGHTEN YOUR PRE-ADOLESCENT LIVES WITH MIRTH AND MERRIMENT.
LET US NOT FORGET, THIS IS VEGAS -- FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT CAPITAL OF THE WORLD --
--AT LEAST SINCE ORLANDO GOT NUKED.
YOU GOT A THRCREW LOOTHE.
A TOUGH AUDIENCE, HUH?
Hmmmm... WHERE SHALL I BEGIN?
VIRTUAL REALITY? NO.
POKER? NO.
SNAKES AND LADDERS? NO.
QUARTERS? NO.

A-HA! I'VE GOT IT!
JUGGLING! A GUARANTEED CROWD PLEASER!
Y'KNOW, WHEN PEOPLE ASK ME WHY I DO WHAT I DO SO WELL--
SURE TO MAKE THE SOUREST OF SOURPUSSES SMILE!
--I TELL THEM, "IT'S FOR THE CHIL-DREN."
MR. FINK'TH GONNA BE FURIOUTH IF THOMETHING BREAKTH.
BE CAREFUL! THOSE ARE VALUABLE.
DON'T WORRY, KIDS, I'M AN EXPERT AT THIS--
NO, WAIT-- IT'S VENTRILOQUISM I'M AN EXPERT AT--
OOPS!
KEE-RASH!

TEE HEE.
HA HA.
HO HO.
HA HA HA HA HA
I KNEW THAT HORRIBLE MISTER FINK HADN'T BEATEN ALL THE FUN OUT OF YOU YET.
NOW THAT THOSE FROWNS HAVE BEEN TURNED UPSIDE DOWN --
--LET ME TAKE YOU TO THE NEXT LEVEL.
LOOK AT THESE WONDERFUL, WONDERFUL TOYS. FUN FOR ALL AGES!
THWELL.
SALLY
KEEN.
SYLVESTER
TRY NOT TO PUT YOUR SISTER'S EYE OUT WITH THAT, SYLVESTER.
NOTHING LIKE A PUNCTURED CORNEA TO SPOIL THE FUN.
WHEEEE!
KCHOW!

SHWIPP
SHWIPP
SHWIPP
LOOK AT ME! LOOK AT ME!
THALLY THEVENTH, GIRL THAMURA!!
KRAK
SKRITCH
SNAP
KERASH
CLANG
KCHOW
OH DEAR. THIS WON'T DO AT ALL.
STOP THIS HORSEPLAY AT ONCE!
KCHOW
VOOTIE
PAIING
DID WE DO SOME-THING WRONG?
IT'S JUST THAT YOU'RE HAVING SO MUCH FUN--
WHY THO THAD, JACK?
--I WANT TO JOIN IN.
SNK
SAY HELLO TO MY LITTLE WHIRLITZER--
--A DERVISH OF OTHER-DIMENSIONAL ORIGIN.
WHAT DOETH IT DO?


PREPARE TO BE AMAZED...
VWHOO
VWHOO
VWHOO
IT'S DESTROYING EVERYTHING IN ITS PATH.
FABULOUS, ISN'T IT?
WILL IT THUCK UTH UP TOO?
DON'T WORRY YOUR CHERUBIC LITTLE HEAD ABOUT THAT, SALLY.
CLAP
CLAP
BACK IN THE BOX IT GOES.
THE WHIRLITZER IS VERY WELL TRAINED.
THENTHATIONAL!
WHAT DO WE DO NOW, JACK? TELL US WHAT YOU HAVE IN STORE.

JACK?
MAYBE HE'S PLAYING HIDE AND THEEK, THYLVETHTER?
I DON'T THINK SO, SALLY.
WHAT THE BLAZES HAPPENED HERE?!?
YOU UNGRATEFUL LITTLE WHELPS! I LEAVE YOU ALONE FOR A FEW HOURS AND YOU DESTROY MY LIFETIME'S COLLECTION.
I DON'T CARE IF YOUR PARENTS DO PAY THE RANSOM.
WHEN I GET THROUGH WITH YOU, YOU'LL BE NOTHING BUT BONES AT THE BOTTOM OF MY FISH TANK.
:ulp:
:yikes:
DON'T BLAME THE KIDS, ORVILLE, BLAME ME. WHAT CAN I SAY, I'M A BAD INFLUENCE.
HALLOWEEN JACK?
ONE AND THE SAME, YOU BIG LUG.
THOUGHT I'D DROP BY AND PAY MY RESPECTS TO THE MAN WHO TRIED TO KILL ME.

DON'T TAKE IT PERSONAL, JACK.
AFTER YOU TOOK OVER VEGAS, THE SYNDICATE PUT OUT A PLATINUM CONTRACT ON YOU!
WHO COULD PASS UP A PAYOFF LIKE THAT?
OBVIOUSLY NOT YOU, ORVILLE.
NOOOO... NOT THE...
SPLORSH!
GLUB... FISH TANK...!
AND THE MORAL OF THIS STORY IS...
IF YOU CROSS HALLOWEEN JACK...
...THOONER OR LATER, YOU'RE GONNA THLEEP WITH THE FITHETH.
CHOMP
CHOMP
CHOMP

WITH RESPECT FOR AND APOLOGIES TO THE LATE GREAT DOCTOR SEUSS.

THE FROG PRINCE
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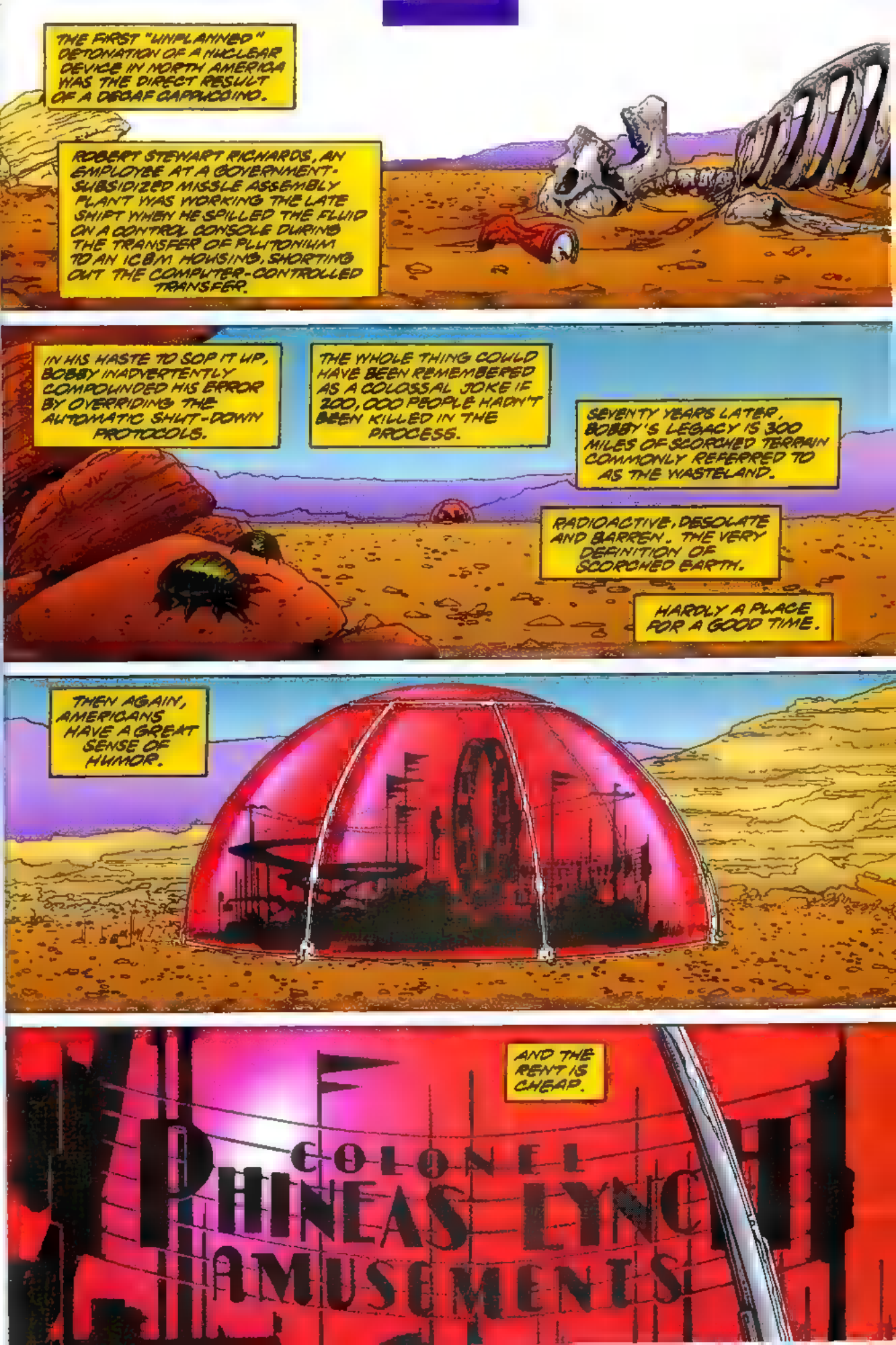
COMPUTER COLOR
DAMNANT QUOD NON INTELLIGUNT.
KILL IT! KILL IT!
KILL THE FILTHY BEAST!
OFF WITH ITS HEAD!

UNNATURAL! INHUMAN!
SOMEONE PLEASE HELP ME! I'VE DONE NOTHING!
NOTHING? YOU'RE A MONSTER!
DIE, MONSTER, DIE!
M'LADY, NO! DON'T GET TOO CLOSE!
IT'S AN ABOMINATION! IT'S NOT ONE OF US!
...ERRARE HUMANUM EST...
PRINCESS SHAKTI, DON'T LET THEM HURT ME! I'M INNOCENT AND...AND I'M AFRAID. WILL YOU HELP ME?
I...
...I...
...YES.
YES.
...IT'S NOT ONE OF US.
KILL IT.
KILL
KILL
KILL
PRINCESS SHAKTI!
...E MORTE. MAY THE LORD HAVE MERCY ON YOUR SOUL.
SHUNK

NO!
LORD! I'VE NEVER RECEIVED AN IMPRESSION LIKE THIS! SO STRONG, SO [redacted]! AS IF IT WAS ACTUALLY HAPPENING!
I HAVEN'T HAD ONE OF THOSE DREAMS IN YEARS. WHAT COULD IT MEAN?
IT MEANS I NEED HELP.
I'LL CHECK THE LAB...
"...MEANSTREAK'S ALWAYS THERE."
HI, CEREBRA! YOU'RE PROBABLY WONDERING WHY I'M WEARING AN ENVIRONMENTAL SUIT INDOORS, RIGHT?
WRONG. WHERE'S KRYSTALIN?
KRYS? SHE'S OUT AND ABOUT ON ANOTHER OF BOSSMAN XI'AN'S "FIND THE NEW MUTANT" MISSIONS.
SHE CHECKED IN A WHILE AGO FROM PARTS UNKNOWN.
WON'T BE BACK IN RADIO CONTACT FOR 24 HOURS.
MAN, THESE SUITS ARE SO BULKY, THEY EVEN HAMPER MY MOVEMENTS! MAYBE THE SUIT'S WIRELESS CONNECTION TO ITS MAIN POWER SOURCE GETS OVERLOADED BY THE HEAT MY BODY GENERATES AT FULL SPEED.
YOU KNOW HOW EASILY THESE THINGS FEED BACK ENERGY.

KRYSTALIN MUST GET BACK HERE IMMEDIATELY. I'VE SENSED THE PRESENCE OF AN EXTREMELY POWERFUL MUTANT. I NEED HER TO MAKE CONTACT.
OH, SO THAT'S WHY YOU'RE AWAKE! BEING A LIVING MUTANT DETECTOR SURE CAN GET IN THE WAY OF A GIRL'S BEAUTY REST.
NOT THAT YOU NEED IT, OF COURSE. WHY, AT THE RISK OF BEING SEXIST I'D HAVE TO SAY YOU'RE...
ARE YOU LISTENING TO ME? SHE HAS TO GO.
ARE YOU LISTENING TO ME? SHE CAN'T. IF IT'S SO IMPORTANT, WHY DON'T YOU GO?
BECAUSE IT'S NOT MY RESPONSIBILITY! I'M NOT THE MUTANT WELCOME WAGON! I'VE GOT WORK TO DO HERE!
SOMEONE WOKE UP ON THE WRONG SIDE OF THE BED! WHAT'S THE MATTER... AFRAID?
KRZLAZK
YEEOW!
...
I AM NOT AFRAID OF ANYTHING.
DID I SAY AFRAID? WHAT I MEANT TO SAY WAS... uh... AFLOAT.
YEAH, 'CAUSE YOU JUST HAVE TO STAY AFLOAT UNTIL KRYS GETS BACK.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO.
THAT'S RIGHT, I DON'T HAVE TO DO ANYTHING.
GET THE ENVIRO-SUIT BACK IN THE EXPERIENCE WHERE IT BELONGS. AND MAKE SURE THAT BUG'S POWER CELLS ARE FULLY CHARGED.
YES MA'AM.


THE FIRST "UNPLANNED" DETONATION OF A NUCLEAR DEVICE IN NORTH AMERICA WAS THE DIRECT RESULT OF A DECAF CAPPUCCINO.
ROBERT STEWART RICHARDS, AN EMPLOYEE AT A GOVERNMENT-SUBSIDIZED MISSLE ASSEMBLY PLANT WAS WORKING THE LATE SHIFT WHEN HE SPILLED THE FLUID ON A CONTROL CONSOLE DURING THE TRANSFER OF PLUTONIUM TO AN ICBM HOUSING, SHORTING OUT THE COMPUTER-CONTROLLED TRANSFER.
IN HIS HASTE TO SOP IT UP, BOBBY INADVERTENTLY COMPOUNDED HIS ERROR BY OVERRIDING THE AUTOMATIC SHUT-DOWN PROTOCOLS.
THE WHOLE THING COULD HAVE BEEN REMEMBERED AS A COLOSSAL JOKE IF 200,000 PEOPLE HADN'T BEEN KILLED IN THE PROCESS.
SEVENTY YEARS LATER, BOBBY'S LEGACY IS 300 MILES OF SCORCHED TERRAIN COMMONLY REFERRED TO AS THE WASTELAND.
RADIOACTIVE, DESOLATE AND BARREN. THE VERY DEFINITION OF SCORCHED EARTH.
HARDLY A PLACE FOR A GOOD TIME.
THEN AGAIN, AMERICANS HAVE A GREAT SENSE OF HUMOR.
AND THE RENT IS CHEAP.
COLONEL PHINEAS LYNCH AMUSEMENTS

OKAY. THIS IS EASY. I'M HERE, HE'S HERE. ALL I'VE GOT TO DO IS FIND HIM.
GOOD THING I LOCKED THE EXPERIENCE'S AUTO-PILOT ON MY POSITION. I'D LIKE NOTHING MORE THAN A QUICK GETAWAY FROM THIS PLACE.
I HATE CROWDS. THE PRESS OF BODIES.
STRANGE EYES STARING AT YOU.
FEELS LIKE SOMEONE'S GOING TO POINT AND SAY...
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, YOU SEE BEFORE YOU A MONSTER!
A HIDEOUS ABOMINATION THAT I, COLONEL PHINEAS LYNCH, SINGLE-HANDEDLY CAPTURED DEEP IN THE IRRADIATED WILDERNESS!
HURRY, HURRY! STEP RIGHT UP! IT'S MORE MALEVOLENT THAN A MUTANT, DEADLIER THAN A DEGEN, SCARIER THAN YOUR WORST NIGHTMARE, THE SAVAGE--
--DEMON OF THE WASTELANDS!
DON'T GET CLOSE, FOLKS. IT EATS HUMAN FLESH!
HELLO! WHAT HAVE WE HERE?

2099 bitmapped

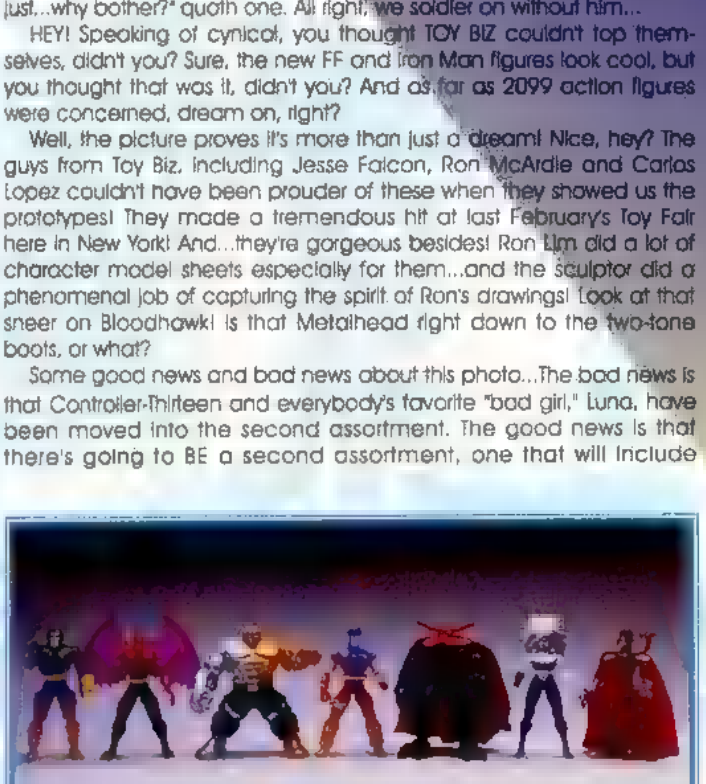
Reality Bytes

It had to happen! After the contest that cleaned his desk, Joey has actually run out of things to say! How could this happen? How could this be? Better question: how can we fill this page? Close friends of Cavalieri assert that he's finally become too cynical to even speak: "It's just...why bother?" quoth one. All right, we soldier on without him...

HEY! Speaking of cynical, you thought TOY BIZ couldn't top themselves, didn't you? Sure, the new FF and Iron Man figures look cool, but you thought that was it, didn't you? And as far as 2099 action figures were concerned, dream on, right?

Well, the picture proves it's more than just a dream! Nice, hey? The guys from Toy Biz, including Jesse Falcon, Ron McArdle and Carlos Lopez couldn't have been prouder of these when they showed us the prototypes! They made a tremendous hit at last February's Toy Fair here in New York! And...they're gorgeous besides! Ron Lim did a lot of character model sheets especially for them...and the sculptor did a phenomenal job of capturing the spirit of Ron's drawings! Look at that sneer on Bloodhawk! Is that Metalhead right down to the two-tone boots, or what?

Some good news and bad news about this photo...The bad news is that Controller-Thirteen and everybody's favorite "bad girl," Luna, have been moved into the second assortment. The good news is that there's going to BE a second assortment, one that will include Breakdown, ShadowDancer, Junkpile, Xi'an, Dominic and...get this...Halloween Jack! That one's just right for that reality-bending reprobate on your Christmas list...or your enemies list!



Okay, okay. We admit it. We're coming out with two new 2099 books. Are we ready to talk about 'em here? No we ain't. Why? Because what would we brag about next month? Let's just say that we got some of the best guys currently working in comics to join us here in our little virtual comic book playground, and you better believe they're eager to make their mark on this universe. We've got an event planned early next year that will make "One Nation Under Doom" seem as commonplace and everyday as the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace. More about that next month, too...

The series will make their "premiere" of sorts in 2099 A.D. GENESIS. Fitting title, right? That'll give you the first glimpse of the costumed crazies who'll be getting their own books at the end of this year!

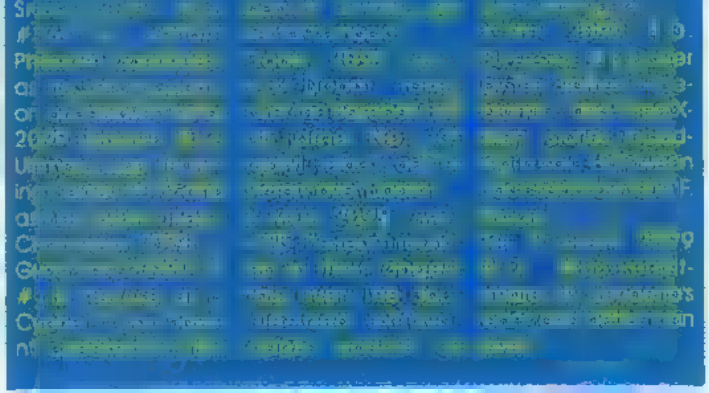
We'll announce it here! Due to the overwhelming buzz caused by the "One Nation Under Doom" event, the next provocative, paradigm-busting premise will be "City of the Dead!" This is a slightly more exclusive, localized happening, occurring between DOOM and X-MEN 2099. As the title implies, it involves a whole city: Halo City to be exact! That's the community Doom founded as a sanctuary for mutants, and other socially-undesirable reprobates! The "Dead" part refers to dead mutants...who won't stay dead long! You'll see this saga begin in X-MEN 2099 #26...and have serious repercussions in our Latverian leader's magi To save you any confusion, look for the cover symbol similar to the one we did for Doom's reign. To save us confusion, we should stay home in bed, swear off caffeine and generally not embark on ambitious projects that involve cross-continuity...or crossing the street without a guide dog!

One last bit: X-MEN #25 appears this month! It's double-sized! No, really! Bigger than any X-MEN 2099 story has been before! It's all by John and Roni The traditional foil and embossed cover! To all you naysayers who didn't think we'd get this far...NYAAH!

More next month about the Hildebrandts, Spidey Meets Spidey, 2099 A.D. APOCALYPSE, [illegible]ws about the Doom event after "City of the Dead" that will make changing Presidents look about [illegible] exciting as changing socks (hey, a first time for everything, right?).

Perhaps now Mr. Cavalieri can be persuaded to say a few words? Lia contends that our boy has had his personality completely subsumed by watching too much of "The Late Show," so if we can get him to say something that perhaps isn't in the form of a Top Ten List...?

Ahh, let 'im sulk.



"EATS HUMAN FLESH" MY EYE! THAT'S HIM! IT'S GOT TO BE!
SEE, I CAN'T LET BEAUTIFUL WOMEN WALK AROUND UNESCORTED. BOSS'S ORDERS.
SO WHAT DO YA SAY I SHOW YOU AROUND?
WE GOT A PROBLEM HERE.
YOU'LL GET TO SEE THE FREAKS UP CLOSE.
I WILL, WILL I?
SAY, DO I KNOW YOU? YA LOOK FA--
MURK!
BRAK

GARVIN! HAVE YOU LOST YOUR MIND?
P.U.M.F
NO, JUST CONTROL OF HIS CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM.
WHA--?
SHRAB
KOM
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?
WHO ARE YOU? WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO HIM?
SORRY, GOTTA RUN. HERE...! CATCH!
NO! STOP, YOU MORON!
CAN'T... HELP IT!

LATER.
GOT TO MAKE THIS FAST.
BEFORE THEY FIND ME WITH IT.
NORMAN.
WHAT?
MY NAME IS NORMAN, NOT "IT". WHAT'S YOURS?
UM... SHAKTI. SHAKTI HADDAD. CODENAME CEREBRA.
CODENAME?
I'M AN X-MAN. WE ALL HAVE ONE.
THEN YOU'RE A MUTANT?
YES, AND SO ARE YOU. BUT A KIND I'VE NEVER SEEN BEFORE.
MUTANT POWERS NORMALLY DEVELOP AT PUBERTY, BUT THIS SAYS YOU HAVEN'T [redacted] PUBERTY YET. STILL, QUITE A METABOLIC ACTIVITY. HMM...
I'LL NEED TO DO BETTER TESTING. LET ME TAKE YOU OUT OF HERE.
NO.

WHAT?
I SAID NO.
BUT WHY? YOU'RE IN A CAGE...
...WHERE I'M FED AND SHELTERED!
JUST WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?
NOT ALL MUTANTS ARE LIKE YOU, BEAUTIFUL AND SUPER-POWERED. HECK, I CAN'T EVEN XRAY!
WHEN I WAS LITTLE, MY MOTHER TOLD ME FAIRY TALES TO KEEP ME FROM CRYING. MY FAVORITE WAS ABOUT A PRINCESS WHO KISSED A [redacted] AND TURNED HIM INTO A HANDSOME PRINCE.
I USED TO DREAM THAT I WAS THE FROG AND SOMEDAY A BEAUTIFUL PRINCESS WOULD MAKE ME A PRINCE.
WELL, I DON'T BELIEVE [redacted] FARY TALES ANYMORE. I AM A FREAK. AND I'LL NEVER BE ANYTHING BUT A FREAK.
PLEASE LEAVE ME ALONE.

GOOD. FINE. WONDER-SHOCKING-FUL! HE WANTS TO STAY IN A FREAK SHOW, IT'S FINE.
HE DOESN'T NEED ME? WELL, WHY SHOULD I BE KILLED FOR HIM? HIM, OR THESE STUPID READINGS HERE THAT...
...THAT...
OF COURSE OF COURSE! WHY DIDN'T I SEE IT? HE'S A META-MORPH! IN A FEW HOURS HE'S GOING TO--
IF I HAD A BOUNTY ON MY HEAD AS HIGH AS YOURS I WOULDN'T BE TALKING TO MYSELF IN PUBLIC, MISS X-MAN.
FORGET THE BOUNTY GAL, HOW ABOUT THE RED MARKET? PIECE OF MUTIE MEAT LIKE THIS'D FETCH A HEFTY PRICE WITH THE SLAVE TRADERS.
DECISIONS, DECISIONS! BUT WHAT'S OUR HURRY?
TEK

HEY BABY... WANNA GO FER A RIDE?
YAAGH!
ARGH!
NO THANKS. I'VE ALREADY GOT ONE.
GOOD THING I LEFT THE BUS ON AUTO-PILOT!
SO MUCH FOR THE LEE BROTHERS.
NOW FOR NORMAN.

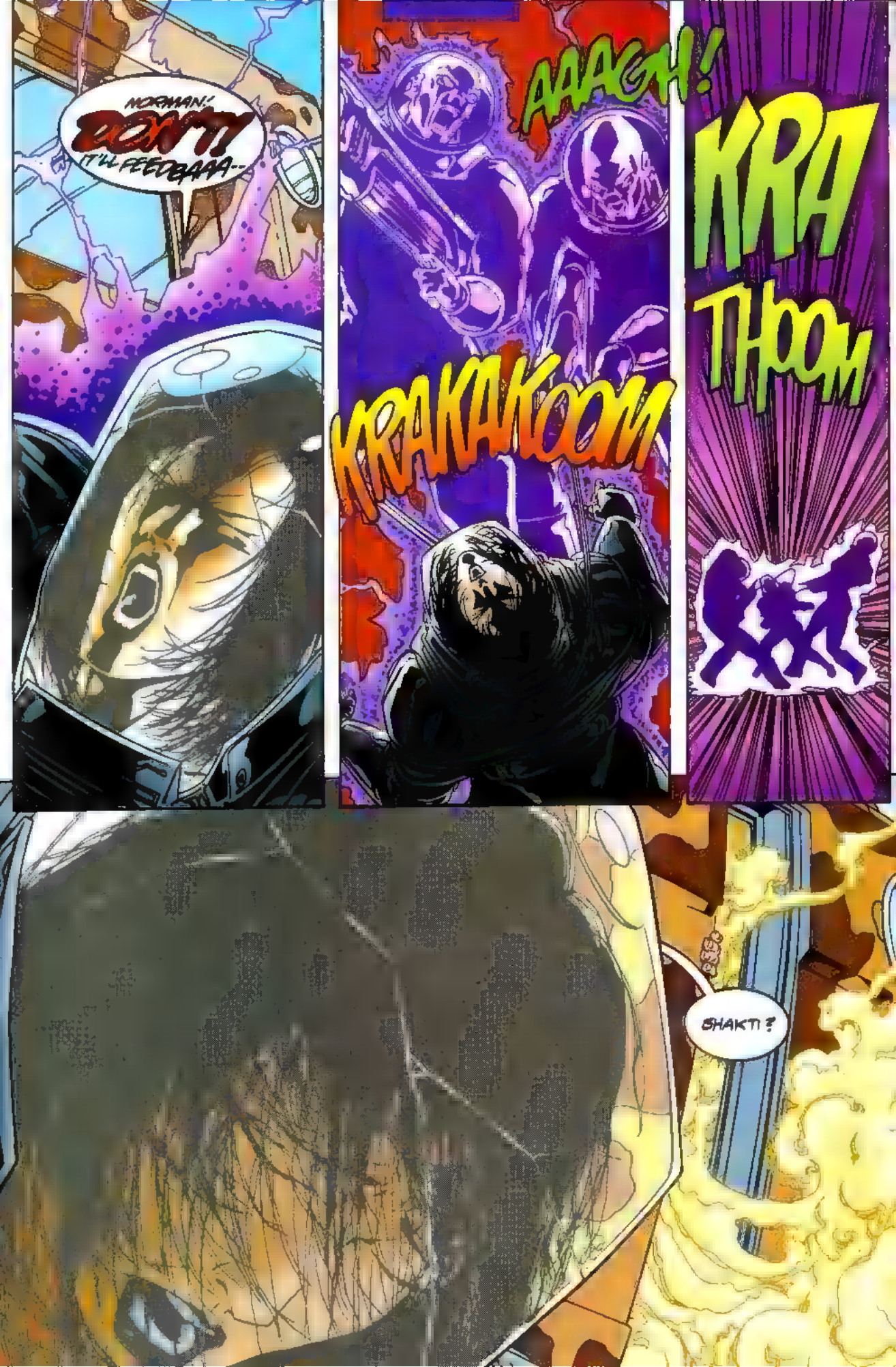
THE WASTELANDS.
WHY NOT DRIVE BACK?
I NEED THE EXPERIENCE'S GENERATORS FOR SOMETHING ELSE.
...THERE AS SOON AS I CAN, SHAKTI. BUT ALL THAT RADIATION'S JAMMING THE SCANNER. MAY TAKE A WHILE.
CARE TO ELABORATE?
WHEN YOU GET HERE. EXPERIENCE OUT.
WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS? THEY'LL BE AFTER US BOTH NOW!
BECAUSE, NORMAN, YOU ARE A META-MORPH.
OKAY. SO?
SO, METAMORPHS ARE MUTANTS WHO PHYSICALLY TRANSFORM INTO SOMETHING... INHUMAN.
GREAT. WHAT'S NEXT, A TAIL?

YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND.
YOUR TRANSMUTATION IS BACKWARDS. THE WASTELAND'S RADIATION MUTATED YOUR CELLS IN THE WOMB.
NOW THAT PUBERTY'S SET IN, YOUR X-FACTOR GENE HAS ACTIVATED AND IS ABOUT TO TRANSFORM YOU INTO...
...A NORMAL HUMAN BEING.
WHAT? THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE!
I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS! WHY WOULD YOU PUT YOURSELF IN DANGER FOR ME?
NO, IT'S NOT. THAT TANK NEXT TO YOU IS AN AUTO-MED HEALING BOOTH. ITS CHEMICALLY-REGULATED ENVIRONMENT CAN CONTROL YOUR METAMORPHOSIS.
BUT TIME'S RUNNING OUT. YOU MUST GO IN NOW AND STAY IN UNTIL THE PROCESS IS COMPLETE. IF NOT, THERE'S NO TELLING HOW YOU'LL CHANGE.
I DENIED IT FOR A LONG TIME. AFRAID OF BEING DISCOVERED, I HID IN MY BOOKS. NEVER HAVING FUN. FRIENDS. LOVERS.
IT'D [redacted] EASY [redacted] ME TO IGNORE YOU. [redacted] EASY. BUT I CAN'T. NOT ANYMORE. PLEASE, LET ME HELP YOU.
I...I... I'M AFRAID.
DON'T BE.
YOU WERE RIGHT. I'M NOT LIKE YOU. BUT I AM A MUTANT.

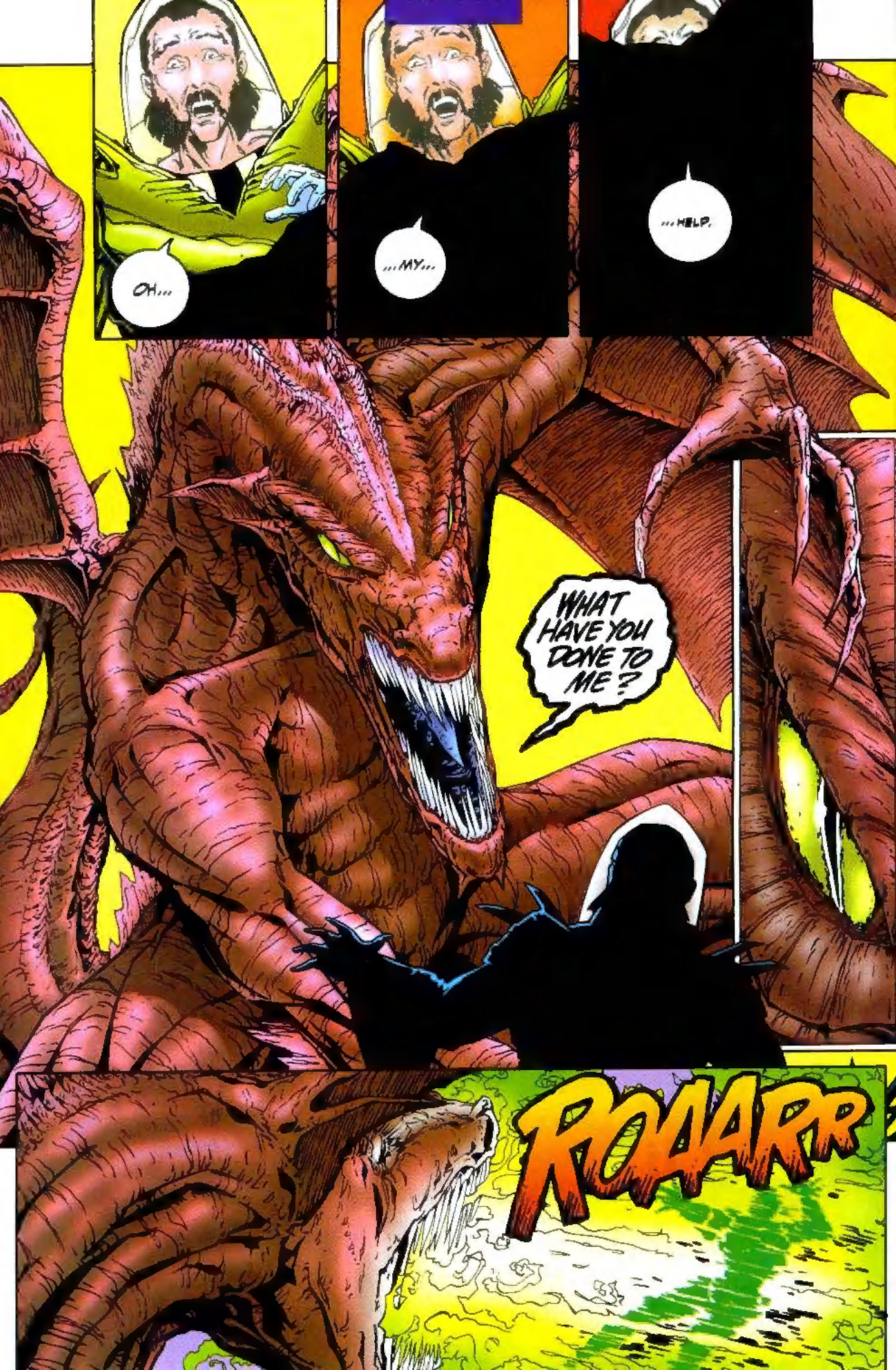
CARE TO ELABORATE?
HAVE YOU GOT IT?
YEP. FIXED AND LOCKED. WE'LL GET THERE BEFORE THE FLOATING HEAD.
EXCELLENT. WE RECOVER THE BEAST, TAKE THE GIRL, THEN WAIT FOR THE LAST ONE.
TWO X-MEN FOR THE RED MARKET!
I CAN SMELL THE MONEY NOW!

LATER.
I CAN'T EVEN LOOK AT HIM IN THERE.
WHAT IF I'M WRONG? I--
PUMP
HUH?
WHIP
WHIP
PHINEAS B. LYNCH AT YOUR DISPOSAL, MS. HADDAD. YOU ALREADY KNOW MY ASSOCIATES.
WHERE IS THE BEAST?
I SAID,..
WHERE IS THE BEAST?!
SMAK

SHAKTI!
SHE'S IN TROUBLE! I'VE GOT TO HELP HER!
BUT I'M NOT SURE IF THE TRANSFORMATION IS COMPLETE!
I...I DON'T CARE. SHE NEEDS ME.
KLICK
ZIDT
ZIDT
ZIDT
ENVIRONMENTAL BREACH
IT'S HIM! YOU! GET IN THERE!
UH, BOSS, I DON'T THINK...
WHAT'S HE DOING-- OH NO!


NORMAN!
DON'T!
IT'LL FEEDAAA--
AAAGH!
KRAKAKOOM
KRA
THOOM
SHAKTI?

LOOK! IT WORKED! IT WORKED!
BRAZAZKK
YAAH!
DON'T MESS WITH PHINEAS LYNCH, BALDY!
I ALWAYS GET MY...
...MAN?


OH...
...MY...
...HELP.
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO ME?
ROAARR

SHAKTI?
OH, NORMAN, NO...
WAIT! DON'T...
...GO.
DON'T BE SAD.
I TOLD YOU I DON'T BELIEVE IN FAIRY TALES.
BUT IT WAS FUN TO PRETEND. GOOD BYE, PRINCESS.
HEY, KID-O. IT'S ME. YOU OKAY?
WH HUH.
THEN WHY ARE YOU CRYING?
'CAUSE I'M A LOUSY KISSER.

ARE YOU EXPERIENCED?

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Editor

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Out Of My Head

Hey!

Is this your first X-MEN 2099 comic?

If so, welcome! Look, I'll even forgive that you bought it just 'cause it said "Number One" on it. Just as long as you promise to scope out our regular monthly X-MEN 2099 title! Deal? This month, it's a special celebration: our big-time, gala, double-sized 25th issue! What's the matter, you don't think that's an achievement? Twenty-five issues of uninterrupted John Francis Moore and Ron Lim storytelling!

And hey, we know that these stories tend to spotlight our futuristic mutants in solo action, but from #25 on, team spirit is the order of the day!

All right, you regulars know all this, so it's time to hear from you!

Dear Are you Experienced,

X-MEN 2099 is my favorite Marvel book along with FORCE WORKS. John Francis Moore is my favorite writer and Ron Lim and Harry Candelario's artwork can't be beat. Ron Lim draws the best Bloodhawk! I hope he stays on the book for the rest of his career! Candelario's inks go along with Lim's pencils perfectly. Tom Smith is also my favorite colorist. Issue #20 was awesome! I really liked the glossy paper and Monstrobot. This book is better than the original X-Men.

1. Where are Cerebra, Skullfire and Luna?

2. Ever thought of a 2099 movie?

Daybar Irizarry
Stamford, CT

We dig John, Ron and Harry, too, Daybar, and we hope they're around for a long, long time as well. Plenty of Cerebra this ish, eh? Cerebra, Skullfire and Luna hope to get Xi'an out of the Theatre of Pain. They're all in ish #25 this month! 2. Sure, we'd love to do a movie, but who'd play Joey? Nah, no movie, but the Bloodhawk action figure looks just like Ron draws him!

Dear Joey,

I had to write this letter to say I love this comic (like every other fan)! It's great. It has good characters that have unique personalities, some of the best art around and engrossing storylines! I'd most of all like to compliment Ron Lim and John Moore for doing one of the best jobs on a comic I've ever seen. Thanks for having no guest artists, too. I mean, SPIDER-MAN 2099 has had numerous ones.

1. Can you please straighten out Xi'an's mental problems?

2. If you make another series (which I'd love to see) make Joe Madureira do it. But don't overwork Ron.

3. I read you're thinking about bringing back a character I thought was dead. If you do, don't make it Serpentina. She was an okay character, but I don't think anyone wants to see another back-from-the-dead story.

4. "Ruth Kirsten"? (See #53 of the 1993 Marvel Masterpieces.)

5. Could you explain what that little eyeball with a spine does?

6. Just saw a preview of the new toy line and I have one demand: Krystalin needs to be in it.

Till Luna and Tim settle down and start a family, Make Mine Marvel 2099!

Conor Rainey
Fairbanks, AK

Conor, Xi'an's "mental problems" get dealt with in X-MEN 2099 #25! Krystalin isn't in the first or second group of toys, but we hope she'll be part of future groups. Joe Madureira? Why not? Letterman got Salman Rushdie, didn't he?

Dear X-Men 2099,

I love the idea of an X-MEN 2099 SPECIAL! Glad you're finally doing one. Could you please make Luna part of the team? She's cool. Issue #18 was great! Why's Halloween Jack so crazy? One more X-Man would be cool, and I don't see why Halloween Jack couldn't be part of the team either. So till the Thing joins the X-Men 2099, Make Mine Marvel!

John Dixon
Winfield, IL

Hope you enjoyed this first X-MEN 2099 SPECIAL, John! As for Luna and Halloween Jack becoming part of the team, Luna's a possibility, but Jack's got his hands full in Vegas. But what would you say to a mini-series starring either of them?

Dear X-Perienced,

This comic is great! It's excellent what you did to Loki (now Halloween Jack). Will he join the team now? That'd be cool because the X-Men seem less serious these days. Good ol' Jack would bring with him some needed humor. Even if he is somewhat homicidal.

Also, it was great to see more of Cerebra's talents, besides the mutant ones. I hope she has the opportunity to use her physical skills in a battle soon.

The art is great, as are the stories. John Moore, Ron Lim and Harry Candelario are doing great work! Keep it up.

1. Is La Lunatica going to officially join the team?

2. Will we be seeing Ten Eagles again any time soon?

3. Did Krystalin quit the team?

4. Will Xi'an be coming back any time soon?

5. When will we see a final confrontation between the X-Men and the Theatre of Pain?

6. Will Metalhead rejoin the X-Men?

7. Is Bloodhawk an X-Man?

8. How about letting Psycho K, Wingspan and One Eyed Jack live and join the team?

Well until Metalhead falls in love with the ShadowDancer, Make Mine Marvel!

Travis Hupp
Elkton, VA

Hey, Travis, all these questions will be dealt with from ish #25...on!

Dear X,

I am the biggest X-MEN 2099 fan! I think it's the best Marvel Comic ever made. My favorite heroes are Metalhead because he can change his body into any kind of metal, Bloodhawk, because he can turn into a creature with wings and last but not least, Krystalin, because she's really cute!

1. Is there or will there be an Archangel 2099? 2. Give thanks for J.F. Moore, Ron Lim, Harry Candelario, Tom Smith and Joey Cavalieri.

Martin Collins
Hamilton, OH

You left out Lia! As for your Archangel question, Martin, probably not!